

Child Protection Policy

Issued Date	11/28/2016
Applicable to	All employees
Update	10/05/2020

1. Purpose of the Child Protection Policy

Women Political Leaders (WPL) supports the rights of children and is committed to their safety and well-being.

All WPL employees share a common responsibility and commitment to the prevention and reporting of child abuse observed in connection with their work for WPL.

This policy is intended to provide guidance to all WPL employees on the definitions of child abuse and on the steps to take if encountered in the course of their work.

All concerns and allegations of child abuse or possession or access to any material that is abusive towards children will be taken seriously by the board at WPL and responded to immediately and appropriately - this could also involve referrals to the appropriate children's services, authorities or law enforcement agencies.

2. Scope of the Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all employees working under any form of contract with WPL including interns. Those working with WPL as volunteers, Senior Advisors, partners or consultants are also expected to observe its spirit.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the definition of a child is "every human being below the age of 18" as recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child.

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.¹

Types of abuse are defined as follows:²

Physical: Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Emotional: Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, and denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Neglect and negligent treatment: Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health.

Sexual: Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.

Exploitation: Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.

4. Principles/Code of Conduct

All children regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity have equal rights to protection and freedom from abuse and exploitation as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

WPL does not tolerate or accept any form of child abuse.

WPL does not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.

WPL does not tolerate possession or access to any material that is abusive towards children.

WPL staff should not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts, where under the law(s) applicable to the child, the child is below the age of consent or the act(s) are an offence under relevant laws.

WPL staff should wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.

WPL staff in connection with their work for WPL should not invite unaccompanied children into their home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.

WPL staff should use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately and never exploit or harass children or access child pornography through any medium.

WPL staff should refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children and from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.

WPL staff should comply with all relevant legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour and they should immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.

5. Process & Guidelines

WPL commitment to the protection of children is guided by the following:

5.1 Awareness

The WPL Child Protection Policy will be part of the policy framework which is explained to every new staff member as part of their induction and they must confirm receipt and compliance with the policy with their signature.

5.2 Reporting/Responding

Reporting suspected or actual child abuse or access or possession of material that is abusive towards children is mandatory for all to whom this policy applies.

Initially all concerns should be raised with the next level management and the

Compliance Officer.

Any concern, disclosure or accusation is alleged rather than proven at this point. WPL will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse in connection with the organisations work. WPL reserves the right to report concerns to the appropriate external bodies and authorities if needed.

6. Confidentiality

Any reporting in relation to this policy will be handled with extreme and strict confidentiality.

7. Review Process

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Compliance Officer in consultation with the Board, unless an earlier need is identified.

If you have any questions about this Policy, its interpretation, or its application to potential activity, or if you would like to report a known or suspected violation of this Policy, please contact our Compliance Officer Stephanie Michel by email at stephanie@wpleaders.org

¹ As per definition of the *Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention*, (Geneva, 29-31 March 1999, World Health Organization).

² As defined by the *Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention*, (Geneva, 29-31 March 1999, WHO.)